



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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REGULATIONS PROPOSED FOR EARLY MIGRATORY BIRD HUNTING SEASONS

The Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed hunting regulations for early migratory bird seasons opening before October 1.

The proposed early season regulations cover mourning, white-winged, and white-tipped doves; band-tailed pigeons; woodcock; common snipe; rails; common moorhens and purple gallinules; September teal seasons; sandhill cranes; sea ducks; and falconry regulations.

Most of the proposed regulations are similar to last year's. Shooting hours for early seasons again will be from one-half hour before sunrise until sunset.

The proposals also include continued suspension of September hunting seasons for teal. The Service cancelled these seasons last year in response to the severe drought, reduced breeding populations, and poor duck production.

Preliminary results of waterfowl surveys conducted this spring indicate that breeding populations of blue-winged teal in surveyed areas dropped to 3.2 million, down 12 percent from last year's 3.6 million and 34 percent below the long-term average for this species. This is the lowest population estimate recorded for this species since surveys began in 1955 and represents the third time since 1983 that blue-wing numbers have hit a record low.

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The drop in blue-winged teal numbers comes despite the reduction in last fall's harvest, and reflects last year's poor production and continued poor habitat conditions--including lack of the dense nesting cover favored by this species--across much of the prairies.

Other significant aspects of the proposed regulations include:

Atlantic Flyway--Proposal for an experimental early Canada goose season in western North Carolina to harvest resident birds before migrants arrive, continuation of conservative regulations for woodcock in the eastern management unit (east of the Appalachians), and continuation of the three-bird bag limit for the September wood duck season in Florida.

Mississippi Flyway--Proposed early Canada goose seasons in two harvest zones of Minnesota, and continuation of the experimental September wood duck season in Tennessee and Kentucky.

Central Flyway--A proposed experimental white-winged dove season in Texas with area-specific limits for mourning doves in the special dove area in the south zone, and an expansion of the zone in Texas where sandhill cranes may be hunted.

Pacific Flyway--Proposed continuation of all of last year's frameworks, harvest options, and hunts.

Details of the proposed regulations will be published in the July 12, 1989, Federal Register. Public comments are requested by July 21, 1989, and should be addressed to the Director (MBMO), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, DC 20240. Regulations for "late" migratory bird seasons (those opening October 1 or later), including most waterfowl seasons, will be proposed in early August following completion of waterfowl population and habitat surveys.